Amendments to the claims

Claims 1-33.   (canceled)

34. (New) An audio program player comprising:

a input port for receiving a plurality of separate digital compressed audio program files from an external source,

a digital memory unit for persistently storing said audio program files and for further storing at least one sequencing file containing data specifying an ordered sequence of a collection of said audio program files,

an audio output unit including at least one speaker or headset for reproducing said audio program files in audible form perceptible to a listener,

one or more manual controls for accepting commands from said listener, and

a processor for continuously delivering a succession of said audio program files in said collection to said audio output unit in said ordered sequence specified by said sequencing file in the absence of a command from said listener, and for discontinuing the reproduction of the currently playing audio program file and instead continuing the reproduction at the beginning of a listener-selected one of said audio program files in said collection in response to a command from said listener.

35. (New) The audio program player as set forth in claim 34 further comprising a display screen for displaying a visible listing describing each audio program file in said collection wherein said listener-selected audio program file is chosen by said listener by employing one or more of said controls to select an audio program file described on said visible listing.

2

36. (New) The audio program player as set forth in claim 35 wherein said display screen provides a visible indication of said currently playing audio program file on said visible listing.

37. (New) The audio program player as set forth in claim 36 wherein said processor responds to a skip forward command accepted from said listener by discontinuing the reproduction of said currently playing audio program file and instead continuing the reproduction at the beginning of that audio program file which follows said currently audio program file in said ordered sequence specified by said sequencing file.

38. (New) The audio program player as set forth in claim 37 wherein said processor responds to a single skip backward command accepted from said listener by discontinuing the reproduction of said currently playing audio program file and instead continuing the reproduction at the beginning of said currently playing audio program file.

39. (New) The audio program player as set forth in claim 38 wherein said processor responds to the detection of two consecutive skip backward commands for discontinuing the reproduction of the currently playing program segment and instead continuing the reproduction at the beginning of a program segment which precedes the currently playing program segment.

40. (New) The audio program player as set forth in claim 35 wherein each of said audio program files stored in said digital memory unit is designated by a unique program identifier and wherein said sequencing file specifies the program identifier of each of the audio program files in said collection.

3

41. (New) The audio program player as set forth in claim 40 wherein said digital memory further stores program description data comprising a plurality of program description records each of which:

(a) describes a given one of said audio program files stored in said memory unit,

(b) contains the unique program identifier designating said given one of said audio program files,

(c) specifies displayable text describing said given one of said audio program files, and

(d) specifies the storage location of said given one of said audio program files.

42. (New) The audio program player as set forth in claim 34 further comprising a communications port for establishing a data communications link to one or more server computers for receiving said audio program files and said sequencing file from said one or more server computers.

43. (New) The audio program player as set forth in claim 42 wherein said audio program files received from said one or more server computers are selected by or on behalf of said listener from a library of audio program files available from said one or more server computers.

44. (New) The audio program player as set forth in claim 43 wherein at least some of said program files received from said one or more server computers are specified by requests transmitted by said listener to said server computer via said communication link.

4

45. (New) The audio program player as set forth in claim 44 wherein said one or more manual controls include a keyboard for accepting account information from said listener that is transmitted via said communications link to said one or more server computers to establish a subscription account for said listener, said account information including a unique identification of said listener, a password supplied by and known to said listener, and credit card information for use in billing charges to said listener, and wherein at least some of said program files received from said one or more server computers and specified by said requests transmitted by said listener are purchased by said listener and charged to said subscription account.

46. (New) The audio program player as set forth in claim 42 wherein at least some of said program files received from said server computer are selected by or recommended by said server computer based on data describing the preferences of or past requests submitted by said listener.

47. (New) An audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener, said player comprising, in combination:

a memory unit for storing:

(a) a plurality of digital audio program files,

(b) program description data including displayable text describing each of said audio program files, and

(c) at least one playback session scheduling file which specifies an ordered sequence of a collection of said audio program files,

one or more controls for accepting input commands from said listener,

a display screen for presenting a visual menu listing to said listener containing displayable text describing some or all of the audio program files in said collection,

an audio playback unit for automatically and continuously reproducing said audio program files in said collection in the ordered sequence specified by said playback session scheduling file in the absence of a control command from said listener, and

5

a processor responsive to one of said input commands designating a selected audio program file described on said visual menu listing for causing said audio playback unit to discontinue the reproduction of the currently playing audio program file in said ordered sequence and to instead commence the reproduction of said selected audio program file.

48. (New) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 47 wherein said display screen visually indicates the currently playing audio program file as playing progresses.

49. (New) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 47 further comprising a communications port for receiving said audio program files and said playback session scheduling file from said one or more server computers.

50. (New) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 49 wherein said audio program files received from said one or more server computers are selected by or on behalf of said listener from a library of audio program files available from said one or more server computers.

51. (New) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 50 wherein at least some of said program files received from said one or more server computers are specified by requests transmitted to said server computer by said listener via said communications port.

52. (New) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 51 at least some of said program files received from said server computer are purchased by said listener.

6

53. (New) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 52 wherein said one or more controls include a keyboard for accepting account information from said listener that is transmitted via said communications port to said one or more server computers to establish a subscription account for said listener, said account information including a unique identification for said listener, a password, and credit card information for use in billing charges to said listener, and wherein at least some of said program files received from said one or more server computers and specified by requests from said listener are purchased by said listener and charged to said subscription account.

54. (New) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 53 wherein said audio program files purchased by said listener are transmitted to said player in encrypted form and wherein said processor decrypts said purchased audio program files prior to their reproduction by said audio playback unit.

55. (New) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 50 wherein at least some of said program files received from said server computer are selected at said server computer based on data describing the preferences of said listener.

56. (New) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 50 wherein at least some of said audio program files available from said one or more server computers are organized into subject matter categories and wherein said player transmits a request to said one or more server computers for a catalog listing of programs available in a specified one of said categories and said player thereafter transmits a request for and receives one or more audio program files specified in said catalog listing of programs for future playback.

7

57. (New) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 49 further including editing means operable by said listener for adding, deleting or reordering the audio program files specified by said playback session scheduling file.

58. (New) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 57 wherein said processor responds to a skip forward input command accepted from said listener by discontinuing the reproduction of the currently playing audio program file and instead continuing the reproduction at the beginning of that audio program file which follows said currently audio program file in said ordered sequence specified by said playback session scheduling file.

59. (New) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 58 wherein said processor responds to a single skip backward command accepted from said listener by discontinuing the reproduction of the currently playing audio program file and instead continuing the reproduction at the beginning of said currently playing audio program file.

60. (New) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 59 detection of two consecutive ones of said second commands for discontinuing the reproduction of the currently playing program segment and instead continuing the reproduction at the beginning of a program segment which precedes the currently playing program segment in said ordered sequence specified by said playback session scheduling file.

8

61. (New) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 47 wherein each of said audio program files stored in said memory unit is designated by a unique program identifier and wherein said playback session scheduling file specifies the program identifier of each of the audio program files in said collection.

62. (New) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 61 wherein said program description data comprises a plurality of program description records each of which:

(a) describes a given one of said audio program files stored in said memory unit,

(b) contains the unique program identifier for said given one of said audio program files,

(c) specifies said displayable text describing said given one of said audio program files, and

(d) specifies the storage location of said given one of said audio program files.

9